

## **Education and Alienation – Towards a Neo-liberal Arbitrariness**

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### **1 Modernization of the Public Sector**

#### **1.1 Public Sector and Economic Ideology**

The development of (Western) societies by means of organization and scientification of nearly all societal spheres such as education, welfare and economy is supposedly acknowledged as improvement concerning the progression of both democracy and freedom. However, when the post-war era is conceived as a social new beginning after the horrors of World War I and II, the process of modernization of European states changed its form and content since the late 1970s indicating another kind of development. Whilst claiming to promote and secure freedom and democracy the dominant ideologies and discourses enable and enforce structural alienation in both power structures and procedures breaking down cultural and social options as well as conditions for an actual democratic participation. The provisioning of welfare was a basic citizen right turning rapidly to that of supporting the capabilities of individuals to take responsibility for their own welfare, i.e. the shift from an existing system of collective protection to a system of insurance dependent on individual abilities and skills. Collective responsibility changed into an empty term, an illusionary façade helping to hide that social responsibilities has been outsourced to the individual.

Reshaping the demarcation between public and private economy and supporting a crucial organizational change, the implementation of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) marked a new global order. This agreement particularly supports the shift to public-private partnerships or corporations and the obligation for the public sector to contract out important (social) services. In favor of competition and profit maximization, the “demarcation line” has changed the international political framework in order to assist a more flexible (economic) manoeuvring. (Jensen & Michel-Schertges 2010). The discourses and ideologies of the dominant private sector penetrate and affect larger and larger sections of the public services and opens up for arbitrary power constellations. The imposition of new public management changes public service provisioning and the relation between managers and public sector employees. The formalization of top down management has undermined the employee’s personal and collective influence. (Dale, 1999; Lingard 1996; Whitty 1998, Whitty & Sally 1998). This process of modernization coming along with the commodification of the public sphere and welfare institutions understands the work of both the professions and semi-professions increasingly in terms of economic reason (Gorz, 1989) (re-)organizing and treating it very much like former industrial work. The result of these changes is the eroding autonomy and freedom of method in public sector professional praxis and it is increasingly transforming the university level as well. (Apple, 2005; Gewirtz, 2002; Jensen & Walker, 2006). This mode of thinking is deeply rooted in terms of economic production processes, profit-orientated management of labor, material resources and the (re-)presentation of a successful commodity. All public services are subordinated to this “reasoning”. Even public welfare provisioning are affected, although its strength lies in preventive concepts and work.

Thus, it is not reasonable at all to place such welfare provisioning under the logic of economic reason. The old dichotomy of collective help and social control executed by the state in order to supply a – more or less – acceptable way of living and to secure social stability turns into an even more restrictive *modus vivendi* by transforming collective help to matters of meritocratic acting, i.e. to relate concrete provisioning to individual effort demonstrating unquestioned adjustment. The result of this social policy is, on the one side, a social service differing in quality due to the level of individual effort and subjection. On the other side, it is the transformation of state employees characterized by state-loyalty, professional knowledge and autonomy to consultants and advisers executing tasks within a regulatory framework based on the process of production and workforce surveillance. With respect to social pedagogy, social work and the welfare system, in general, and the education sector, in particular, the main objectives have always been (and are still) first of all to qualify the workforce in order to contribute to the Nation's economic growth and to supply citizenship education within the obligatory (state) institutions of socialization guaranteeing the acceptance of societal norms and rules. The realization of “infinite” accumulation of capital has an impact on the education system in Western societies changing the interrelation and thinking concerning “form and content”.

## **1.2 Education and Economy – Investable Independencies**

To qualify the future workforce the subject matter and teaching material is inevitably related to the respective time and its technical development constituting the production process and the social division of labor. Concerning the technical development it is a race against time condemned constantly being behind the newest knowledge and developments. The task to fulfill is either not being too much behind or at foresee future developments in both technical and social developments. The latter aspects are mainly intertwined. New technologies do not only shape the process of production and consumption, but have as well a deep impact on various spheres of everyday life, social praxis and the social togetherness. In addition to these technical and social dimensions, schooling within education institutions is not just organized in relation to content and its (re-)presentation but (re-)shapes social behavior and action. The internalization of production processes, working places and consumption orientated desired behavior is another major task of schooling processes and educational praxis. Changing modes in production also entail a change in teaching praxis. One of the more significant features is the copying of workplace management and organization. There are clear different historical and economic reasoning in the development of scientific management. Fordism and schooling is mainly based on preparing a skilled workforce, learning workers experiences, fragmented skills and knowledge simplified to actions supporting the isolation of the overall procedures furthering the division of labor and the replaceability of the individual. It is the de-qualification of workforce by narrowing the individual worker's capacity to simple actions, when possible, without any room for judgments, choice and creativity. The idea of democratic influence within the work process is a mirage. Within the process of schooling, the pupils and students are prepared to fit in the Fordist work environment. The Fordist framework influences to a major degree (still) how teaching and learning is organized. The teacher frames the spot of power. Instructions and tasks have to be executed without doubts. To fulfill the required tasks without hesitation and without questioning. One has to learn to follow, to repress one's feelings, i.e. to be able to suspend basic needs such as to follow immediately the urge to visit a restroom, to satisfy one's hunger or thirst. Even social interactions are organized from above.

In the 1980's Fordist schooling was "supplemented" by the inspiration from Japanese industry in the form of the Toyota model. Manufacturing related group-work and problem-solving replaced to a certain degree fragmented work processes and *apparently* hierarchical thinking and the chain of command. It is based upon an illusive notion of having a voice in the production praxis but is rather characterized by a very limited scope of influence within an immovable framework. In addition, the working group serves as well as a silent inconspicuous element of surveillance. The, more or less, common share of work is silently presupposed and accepted by the group. Surveillance is hidden under the mask of "group reflection processes". Concerning to education, workplace related schooling demands teachers to be professional instructors, team leaders and salesmen without distraction from general concerns about subject matter and the student's individual situations. (Jensen & Michel-Schertges 2010) According to Shumar, after the Fordist and Keynesian system broke down, the shift towards a global productive structure had a major impact on higher education in the United States. The reduction to emphasize citizenship education took place as well as the consolidation of private corporations in order to subsidize and sponsor research activities and thus getting private (economic) players enabled to interfere and regulate increasingly matters of higher education.

"One of the central points of this work is that there is an isomorphism between the structure of industries and institutions of a profit-making nature in American late capitalism, and the structure of higher education in the United States. Education is being both produced and consumed in new ways which has entailed the transformation of institutional arrangements, people." (Shumar, 1997, p. 39).

The transformation of university employees into education workers and producers of education is an obvious sign of the commodification of higher education. The aim is to increase capital aiming to socialize the (future) workforce and to strengthen consumerism, i.e. disciplining the workforce. (Michel-Schertges/Jensen 2010) In addition to the Fordist and Toyota management model, flexible-accumulation is one way more to create and expand new arenas of profit maximization, including the public sectors like "schools, healthcare, government, [which] find ways to be profitable themselves, that is, to act like businesses (...) the metaphor of the market became more than a metaphor and extended the range of the market" (Shumar, 1997, p. 82). Or as Bonnett puts it:

"Privatized incorporation of the worker/consumer, however, can only be sustained if the bases of collectivist politics are simultaneously eroded. This is not just a matter of changing the social profile of the class structure—the pace of change has been dramatically hastened by rapid deindustrialization and government policy—but [it]also requires the erosion of the organizational and relational bases for collectivism and democratic politics. The defeat of oppositional trade unionism, the far reaching diminution of the powers and autonomy of local government, the recasting of state institutions (abolition and/or restructuring of quangos, changes in personnel and operating criteria, etc.), and the demobilization of new social movements have all sustained a new form of statism. In parallel with the widespread privatization and deregulation, there has been an unprecedented arrogation of central state powers which has openly short-circuited established mechanisms of participation and/or accountability. In this final elimination of corporatist collaboration, individuals are protected by the strong state as long as they have no wish to participate in, or initiate, policy on their own behalf. The aim is thus to construct a robust yet flexible institutional order which precludes political 'interference' in business activity and forcibly imposes market criteria on wide areas of state provision." (Bonnett et al., 1987, p. 15).

Profit – the mystified form of surplus value – is still the primary aim. With respect to flexible accumulation, university colleges and universities are, like all other social segments, related to surplus production, i.e. to meet the demand of workforce recruitment (human capital); to produce instrumental knowledge embodied in the work force ready to compete and to be sold on the market. Stehr (1994, p. 110) claims that knowledge always has been treated and traded like a commodity. A significant change though can be observed in the relation of knowledge production and trade. Thus, it is crucial to keep the critical discourse alive, i.e. resisting economical simplicities and the reduction of the importance of knowledge and education in cultural and social settings.

The political concern is about the execution of economic power and the “liberation” from "expensive and ineffective" state institutions of education. In line with the new managerial and administrative reason, the main aim has been transformed to effective use of capital and (social) resources legitimized by international agreements. Shumar describes the process:

“State universities to survive must both seek corporate research partner-ships and prove that they are vital to an economy of the area, and they must also rationalize their faculties, departments and curriculum. Private universities have to sell a product and it must be a product that people desire, if not high prestige then a program of skill that serves a special niche market” (Shumar, 1997, p. 151).

And he continues: "In this way, mass-culture, upward mobility, the reification of cultural capital, and the commodification of education can be seen as interlinking processes." (Shumar, 1997, p. 151) The GATS policy has a crucial leverage on planning and implementation of both the production of credentials in higher education and the realization of its market value.

### **1.3 Replacing the Structural Pre-Conditions: Legitimization of the New Agenda**

The structural preconditions are introduced and outlined in the EU by the Bologna Process in which the interpretation is an expression of the standardization of tertiary and higher educational studies. The analysis of the structural reform shows in what way this development is legitimized. In 2007, the importance of qualifications frameworks has been expressed in the so-called London communiqué:

“Qualifications frameworks are important instruments in achieving comparability and transparency within the EHEA [European Higher Education Area] and facilitating the movement of learners within, as well as between, higher education systems. They should also help HEIs [Higher Education and Institutions] to develop modules and study programmes based on learning outcomes and credits, and improve the recognition of qualifications as well as all forms of prior learning.

We note that some initial progress has been made towards the implementation of national qualifications frameworks, but that much more effort is required. We commit ourselves to fully implementing such national qualifications frameworks, certified against the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, by 2010. Recognising that this is a challenging task, we ask the Council of Europe to support the sharing of experience in the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks. We emphasise that qualification frameworks should be designed so as to encourage greater mobility of students and teachers and improve employability.” (Official Bologna Process website).

This process created the platform on which the competition between rival institutions takes place. The “game” has been established and is accepted by the participants. To question this (instrumental) thinking into the extreme: Why do universities accept and even improve the standardized ranking systems instead of marking originality and uniqueness? Administrative categorization based on capitalist competition rules disguised by administrative procedures and top-down decision-making, accompanied by group-centered work processes, replaces profession’s knowledge and experiences. Based on (international) standardization, research and teaching success is categorized in terms of competitive modes of quantifications. The focus of orientation is to spare as much resources as possible and instead offering best possible opportunities for students to study in order for both top expertise and human development. The higher the number of students that graduate successfully in less time the better. With respect to research, it is the number of articles being accepted and printed in top peer-reviewed journals that finds its way into the statistical assessment, defining the good researcher and good research. Uncritical and active contribution refers to the scientist’s character mask (cf. Marx, 1986) showing the dependencies and acknowledgement within the system of the scientific community. Although based on scholarly achievements, scientific success is inevitable intertwined with the aims of the superordinate organizations that do follow (inter-) national education policies. The respective countries and their (voluntary) acceptance of the intra- and international educational framework try to avoid opportunities for resistance. However, Marx’ character mask is not to be understood as determination. The circle of (re-)production of power and class relations can be broken by conscious individuals that actively decide to oppose the given power structures and its mechanisms of constituting this power. Recognizing the competition driven procedures of scientific work means to justify the rules of the “game” and, consecutively, the logic of market competition as overall judgement. Participation suspends from being just a victim. The innocence and virginity disappears: The acceptance of this hegemonic idea and praxis is in reality a silent consensus of one-dimensional governance.

“However, the reality constitutes a more progressive stage of alienation. The latter has become entirely objective; the subject which is alienated is swallowed up by its alienated existence. There is only one dimension, and it is everywhere and in all forms. The achievements of progress defy ideological indictment as well as justification; before their tribunal, the ‘false consciousness’ of their rationality becomes the true conscious.” (Marcuse, 1964, p. 19).

#### **1.4 Performativity, Accountability and Surveillance**

The notion of institutions of higher education, in general, and universities, in particular, has changed over the last decades. From a societal institution recognized for its scholarly work, socio-political voice and theoretical and practical social contributions as well as the place for human and technological development via educating the respective new generations, at present time it is mainly seen as a mean helping to boost economic (national) competition. Organized as an industrial plant delivering the parts demanded by contract. On the one hand, the organizational form and management are structured as any capitalist company aiming to minimize production costs and maximizing profit. On the other hand is the new management and administrative leadership’s focus still on strategic hierarchical distribution of personalized power. The ones that follow the agenda are rewarded as long as they do what is asked for. With the termination of (real) tenure, secure positions belong to the past. Disloyalty towards strategic aims are matters of punishment. The university boards consisting to the majority of public figures, i.e. societal acknowledged businesspersons or leadership figures that do follow the ideas of making the university “public”. That is, following the ideology that the university

is a closed “ivory tower” disconnected from society, public-private partnerships is promoted as well as the spreading of economic reason destroying the unique (traditional) position of the university, as such, within society. In this context, to make the university public means to open a public educational institution for economy and private companies. These boards controlling the institutions have the last vote. Proclamations and announcements about collecting insights of skills, experiences or knowledge from researchers and teachers in order to let these expertise structure the organization and work processes have proven to be lip services. The organization path is already paved.

“The alienation of the public sector work force is managed through three distinctive shifts in discourse – performativity, accountability and surveillance. The performativity discourse concerns the technologies to do with measuring how teachers execute their duties and is alienating because it separates the public sector worker from the purpose and the object of their work. The accountability discourse permits and prohibits the processes on school inspection is alienating because it is based upon mistrust of professional competence and disbelief in the efficacy of self-regulation. The discourse of surveillance shapes the technologies through which educational work is monitored and self-monitored and is alienating because it realizes a compulsion to conform.” (Jensen & Michel-Schertges, 2010, p. 322).

The principle of subsidiarity is defined in the treaty establishing the European Community (Article 5) intending to ensure that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen (surprisingly not by the citizens) and that action at community level is justified in the light of the possibilities available at national, regional or local level. The principle is regularly discussed according to its meaning and application. The latter refers to who has the competence to decide which question is considered in relation to proportionality and necessity.<sup>1</sup> The core issue in governing by the principle of subsidiarity is in which discourse and with what connotation it is used. In political discourses subsidiarity often refers to the nearest democratic political level, which first and foremost allocate the political right, that citizens have the opportunity to elect representatives to the power layer which decides on their behalf. In a democratic understanding, the concern is about both the representative (elected) aspect and the lived democracy reading the principle more like a political guideline than a juridical norm. Central here is the question: who gets the right to execute the competence and decide how the principle is interpreted and used. The origins of the principle as rooted in catholic social ethics are as follows: “things the individual can do himself, should not be transferred to society (prohibition of action). If the individual is not capable to solve certain problems, the society is obliged to give aid (obligation of help).”<sup>2</sup> The principle is used for two different functions: How to regulate existing competencies, power relations and the appointment of positions given the power to do the regulatory work. In the process of the European integration, both functions can be found. In nation-states the notion 'framework law' has become a more and more used term practiced on educational acts giving some local decision making and interpretation to those in power to run educational institutions. In institutions of higher education, it becomes obvious that this principle of subsidiarity is given a serious twist towards instrumental and methodological issues strongly supported by university power holders and technocrats. To an increasing extend, the leadership of those institutions and the privileges of power are allocated to a board where the majority of the members are appointed by and from the institutions, which buy the educational outcome, the

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<sup>1</sup> [http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/subsidiarity\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/subsidiarity_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.constitutional-convention.net/bulletin/archives/000093.html>

future work force. Employees and students are treated as if they are no longer members of the institutions; being denied their former legitimized democratic influence. The frame law tells the board what to do including doing the filigree of the curriculum, hiring and firing the staff and even the capacity of the student flow according to the need of manpower. The teachers, researchers and students have no (longer) a pivotal role in organizational as well as curriculum matters. The turn in the allocation of properties in competencies is given to the business and corporative world with its fundamental approach from technological interest and its embedded strive for narrowing down the costs of the “production processes” under constantly surveillance and permanent rationalization.

In general reform processes in higher education, the response to the enormous rise in student numbers is a simultaneously decline in government funding. The “massification” of the university sector seemed to be unavoidable in order to answer the demand of educated and specialized labor by the labor market. Accompanied by processes based on the notion of “lean” management and administration, new “effective” organizational structures and the rolling-back state-institutions leading to outsourcing public sector services to the market – under the framework of economic reasoning – seem to be an ongoing project. The “rolling-back” of the public sector (Kelsey, 1993) changed to a “rolling-out” phenomenon. It is not any more just about transferring public services to the “free” market but about making public sector service organizations “autonomous” on the one side, and on the other side to maintain the auspice of regulation by the means of funding controlled by the government. The advantage of the rolling-out system lies in handing down the responsibility of institutional decision making by at the same time setting the framework by budget-mastery. Thus assuring the power to lead reform processes according to a certain political direction by the government, when at a first glance it appears that changes of public services are decided on ground of organizational autonomy and free decision making processes whilst actually shifting responsibility and the pressure of being successful to the respective organizations and institutions. Indicators of budget distribution are legitimized by performance based economic reason. Regarding this development, this leads to a “paradigm shift from the idea of tertiary education as a ‘public good’ geared to producing an educated citizenry to a conception of higher education as an individual economic investment.” (Shore 2010: 15) In the framework of global competition constituted by the ideology of performance the (inter-) national vision of institutions of higher education is deeply based on transnational business corporations.

“Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change - based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of ‘quality’, or ‘moments’ of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgement.” (Ball, 2006, p. 144).

But it is not performativity alone. Individual and collective (resp. national) performance is dialectically related to the discourses of accountability and surveillance. Whereas the latter one might be best described by Bentham’s panopticon, i.e. the (architectural) prison structure separating the inmates from each other, giving them the idea of being permanent observed by jailors, thus pressuring the prisoners by the means of self-regulation. The accountability discourse is the mechanism to audit and display outcomes. Performativity, accountability and surveillance are embedded in the discourse of competition, i.e. the

“dynamic of free market capitalism is competition, as both an accumulation strategy and the method of regulating the means and the social relations of production. In a globalized economy, both entrepreneurs and transnational corporations are in a permanent state of competition. The competitions are over the creation and appropriation of surplus value. They are, therefore, in competitions over levels of investment, over energy, materials and labour costs and competitions over sale prices in the distribution of commodities and services” (Jensen & Walker, 2008, p. 23f.).

According to Shore the way how universities work have changed dramatically due to new audit regimes, monitoring and measuring “‘quality assurance’, ‘performance management’ and ‘international benchmarking’” (Shore, 2010, p. 15). Thus, the autonomous sector of higher education is directed by the means of accreditation in the name of quality management revealing new regimes of control replacing the professional democratic academic model. Quality is now defined by the demand of the market rather than by the expertise of the profession as such. It is a silent hostile takeover of higher education by management and administration. The framework defined by the university management aligned to the national goals requested by the government forwarding the demand suggestions by the economy is therefore ruling the institutions of the tertiary sector. “...a quiet intellectual revolution took place. The research councils, which provide 90% of the funding for academic research, introduced a requirement for those seeking grants: they must describe the economic impact of the work they want to conduct. The councils define impact as the ‘demonstrable contribution’ research can make to society and the economy”. (Monbiot, 2009, in: Shore, 2010, p. 22) According to Lorenz this development consists of a combination of

“(1) a constant decrease in the level of service; (2) a constant decrease in the level and quality of employment in the former public sector, which comes down to a steady process of de-professionalization and a reduction in the number and the quality of jobs; and (3) constantly rising prices for the consumers of services such as education, health care, and social security” (Lorenz, 2012, p. 605).

Bureaucracy ratios are criticized and replaced by new analytical techniques from the marked, the business sector. By implementing management orientation whilst introducing New Public Management policy analysis and strategies were integrated as techniques of a general framework. “Useful” research generating aims of funding and evidence-based policy are deeply related with management orientation. (Simons & Olssen & Peters, 2009, p. 8) Directing specific action by the means of a given non-questioned framework refers to the inevitable relation between form and content, “they are two aspects of one and the same thing, which in the process of development of the thing and in its cognition, interpenetrate one another, interact and transform one into the other - Form becomes Content and Content Form.”<sup>3</sup> In the context of contemporary policies, the tertiary education sector is system-based and oriented to the idea of (infinite) growth and in this framework educational planning is structured via the dialectics of form and content influencing to a major degree the reform processes.

The emphasis is upon performance and it should be no surprise that the performance of education systems, schools, teachers and students is frequently expressed in terminology more usually associated with industrial production, like output, quality control, accountability and human resource management. The ideology of performance serves a mechanism through

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<sup>3</sup> Glossary retrieved from: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/help/glossary.htm>



which success of the economic project is demonstrated in incontestable, “neutral” valuations and as a device through which regulates in a similarly incontestable “neutral” manner, the competitions between individuals. The Performance discourse is about measurement; about regulation; as well as about shaping and disciplining subjective identities.

To summarize the process of structuration consists of substantial threads of fibers from economy, ideology and politics and the culture created in and by the educational system itself. Through these constructions the EU principles of subsidiarity have given meaning to the new public management implementation. The consequence is that the phrase accountability becomes the expression for doing what you are expected to do, obedience. The democratic struggle is fought decades backwards using the corporate model emphasizing the top down control instead of using democratic representation with the options of electing the board members. Education has become a place not only governed by the hegemonic idea of market ideology obedient to the ideology of competition but also by all forms of structural alienation.

## 2 Alienation

### 2.1 Everydayness, Alienation and Passivity

Following the notion that “‘man’ is alienated, torn from his self and changed into a thing, along with his freedom” (Lefebvre, 2002, p. 206) Lefebvre criticizes the common notion of alienation as too one sided, overseeing the different kinds and forms of alienation.

“Marx tended to push the many forms of alienation to one side so as to give it one specific definition in terms of the extreme case he chose to study: the transformation of man’s *activities* and relations into *things* by the action of economic *fetishes*, such as money, commodities and capital. Reduced to economic alienation within and by capitalism, alienation would disappear completely and in one blow, through a historical but unique act: the revolutionary action of the proletariat.” (Lefebvre, 2002, p. 207).

The theoretical concept Lefebvre’s is deeply related to his theoretical concept of everyday life and everydayness. Central to Lefebvre’s analysis „is the thesis of the necessity to rehabilitate everyday life (...) His insistence on the transformation of everyday life is based on a demonstration of the hidden significance of the world of the everyday“ (Sünker 1992: 326). Following Heinz Sünker’s explanation: everyday life contains the *real centre of praxis* and it underlies the production of social relations and social need. Here the crucial significance of the historical importance of everyday life becomes obvious:

“Lefebvre examines this historical importance through an analysis and reconstruction of the historical and structural genesis of different forms of everyday life in relation to their social, and thus practically mediated conditions. However, this approach is important not only in a historical sense, but also in terms of the possible and/or necessary future transformation of everyday life. This insight is related to Lefebvre’s research strategy, which integrates the development of his theory with that of his subject: ‘everyday life’.” (Sünker, 1992, p. 327).

However within the historical process – or in a historical materialistic view: in a historical *progress* – life gets more and more fragmented by the process of societalization. Lefebvre „captures the essence of the development of late capitalism, which he defines as a ‘bureaucratic society of controlled consumption’ (1972), with the concept [of] ‘the everyday[ness]’, as a distinct from ‘everyday life’ (1972, p. 39f., p. 164f).“ (Sünker, 1992, p. 327) The leading concept to describe and to analyze everyday life is *ambiguity* that means the

contradictions, which are embedded in everyday life. Within the capitalistic process of modernization, of societalization, the *fragmentation of everyday life* produces *alienation* and *passivity*. For example, the fragmentation of everyday life can be analyzed in the disconnection between social realms like: privacy and public sphere; worktime and leisure time – in contra-distinction to free time (leisure time as reproduction of workforce. This process of societalization includes the consolidation of the everydayness as a deficient form of everyday life, which characterizes modern societies. This process is to identify the movements of a totalization of society, incorporating the development of the subject in the form of both an extreme individuation and a particularization (Lefebvre, 1978, p. 12f.; Sünker, 1992, p. 327). Following this societal conception of *everydayness* is to understand as the establishment of a generalized way of life (see Lefebvre, 1975, p. 225). This generalized way of life or in Lefebvre's term *everydayness* produces alienation by internal colonization which is based on the fragmentation and disintegration of social relationships (see Lefebvre, 1975, p. 242). This alienation process is substantially characterized by a tendency towards passivity and non-participation (cf. Lefebvre, 1975, p. 120 f.). „In general a social situation is produced which is determined by a combined development towards both *fragmented social relationships* and more comprehensive integration into the social totality“ (Sünker, 1992, p. 327 f).

Related to Karl Marx's 18. Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte it is a first crucial step for mankind to gain consciousness about the social-historical situation. Marx says: „Humans make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like an Alp on the brains of the living“ (Marx, 1960, p. 115). To be conscious about alienation is the first step towards a free and emancipatory society. But how to act in an emancipatory way when one is alienated or to say it more in terms of Lefebvre: How to conquer everyday life when being to large extent alienated by the fragmentation of everydayness. Karel Kosic whose term of „*pseudo-concreteness*“ (1986, p. 18) is very close to Lefebvre's „*everydayness*“ describes the destruction of the pseudo-concreteness :

“1. as a revolutionary-critical process of mankind, which is identical to the humanisation of mankind, with the process of „making mankind more human“ of which the crucial steps are social revolutions; 2. as thinking in a dialectical way, to resolve the fetishized world to get to the real and true world, to the `real thing` itself; 3. as the realization of trueness and as creation of the human reality through an ontogenetical process, because for every individual the world of trueness is at the same time his own one, an individual creation, that means a creation of a societal-historical individual. Every individual *must alone and without a substitute* usurp the culture and therefore live his life in an active way”. (Kosic, 1986, p. 18f.)

Like Kosic and Lefebvre, Kilian emphasizes both the notion of a subject, acting objectively, instead of an object, reacting subjectively, (Kilian, 1971, p. 43) as well as the importance of the historical dimension. Applying the idea of alienation whilst examining critically everyday life Lefebvre puts his hypotheses in propositions. In the first proposition he claims to “particularize, ‘historize’ and relativize the concept of alienation” (Lefebvre, 2002, p. 207) because alienation is only understandable and conceivable with a societal frame of reference. It is not possible to be totally alienated or totally disalienated, i.e. both states of mind are only possible in relation to each other. It is an ongoing dialectically movement. (Lefebvre, 2002, pp. 207) This dialectical movement and its abolition is deepened in the second proposition. It

is a movement, that leads to another – even greater – dimension of alienation. Lefebvre exemplifies this, inter alia, by a technical advice disalienating “human activity from nature or from another, less effective technique, but it may bring a technological alienation which can be much deeper” (Lefebvre, 2002, p. 208) like for example the fragmentation of the labor process.

“Thus alienation and disalienation characterize concrete situations, taken in movement and not considered in a motionless way along fixed structural lines. More exactly, the ‘alienation/disalienation’ dialectical movement enables us to determine a structure within concrete, changing situations. Thus a disalienation can be alienating, and vice versa.” (Lefebvre, 2002, p.208)

The third proposition is, for Lefebvre, the worst kind of alienation. It is the lack of awareness of being alienated. Even if awareness of alienation might lead to a furthering step of alienation, the non-existence of one alienation’s awareness closes even the possibility and thus hinders the movement of disalienation at all. The following and fourth proposition is the reification of activity and consciousness. However, even if Lefebvre states, that this form is an extreme case of alienation, he simultaneously points out that “reification disguises the many forms alienation adopts.” (Lefebvre, 2002, p. 208) Not all possible forms of alienation are acting on the same individual. Both alienating and disalienating processes can act and interact at the very same time and, therefore, a final reification would be hardly possible.

“The diversity of these situations shows the extent to which it is difficult to find a simple, objective, general criterion for alienation. This diversity equally shows that it is possible and indeed indispensable to elaborate a *typology* of alienation. We can determine types of alienated-alienating situations. Alienation in everyday life would appear in this typology and would constitute a part of these types (but not their entirety, because there are other alienations: the alienation of society in its entirety, political alienation, for example).” (Lefebvre, 2002, p. 213f.)

The fifth and last proposition is about otherness. There is a clear distinction between “otherness” and the “other”. The relation or confrontation with otherness constitutes a change of the self. The result of this change calls Lefebvre “other” because it changed the former state to (an)other state. It is (again) a dialectical movement: “a never-ending passing from otherness to the other, and vice versa.” (Lefebvre, 2002, p. 2015) These processes of alienating and disalienating that is inevitably related to the confrontation with otherness (people, things, thoughts) has to be considered as a non-stopping circle of non-linear development.

With respect to the categories of alienation that are connected to the discourses of performance, accountability and surveillance proposition three and four are of main interest here. It is about being aware and conscious about structures of alienation constituting deeply the possibility of self-determination or being other-directed. The societal framework of opening up or closing possibilities for acting consciously is, thus, a question of (individual and structural) freedom as a precondition for disalienating. The distinction between being a passive object or an active subject depends to a major degree on the state of autonomy or other-directedness.

## 2.2 Freedom and Arbitrariness

The preconditions of contemporary neo-liberal rationality – and thus hegemonic ideas of market ideologies and competition – are deep embedded in the relationship between freedom and arbitrariness. The concept of freedom (or liberty) is generally described as freedom of non-domination, i.e. being free to the extent that one does not find oneself under the domination of others.

“This notion of freedom, we may begin by noting, refers to a condition in which we can find ourselves, namely, the condition where we are not living under the thumb of another. It does not mean the exercise of a capacity, and so in particular it does not signify the control which an individual or community exercises over the shape of its own existence. Another way to put this contrast lies with the categories deployed by Isaiah Berlin in his classic essay of 1958, ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’. The idea of freedom as non-domination forms a ‘negative’, not a ‘positive’ conception.” (Larmore, n.y., p. 2f.)

According to Isaiah Berlin, the concept of negative freedom is a domain of action of non-interference by others whereas positive freedom is to be understood as self-mastery. (cf. Swan, 2003, p. 117) The first concept has not to be compromised by a despotic regime, while the despot governs and acts in a benevolent and indulgent way toward his population. Even if employees are in work, earning enough money to survive (and consume), they have no option but to “hand over” their labor power to a single employer who can decide at any time to “set the worker free” or to close his enterprise and move it to another place. (cf. Larmore, n.y., p. 5f.) Real freedom requires the absence of all forms of arbitrary interference, including both possible and actual interference by others (cf. Pettit, 1999, p. 22ff) as well as structural interference deriving from the current formation of society. In modern societies, the law sets the societal framework to obtain and maintain social peace within a given society. On the one hand, certain laws guarantee certain individual freedom by restricting the freedom and thus the arbitrary will of others while on the other hand, the law as such represents the will of the leading class and thus only guarantees freedom when existing property issues are not in question. The law serves, primarily, to protect property rights (cf. Locke, 2005) and the distribution of wealth and. Secondly, to tame arbitrary power in order to guaranty freedom and thus to maintain the current social order.

## 2.3 Freedom and Autonomy

The concepts of negative and positive freedom complement themselves. The first one alone only secures social peace and thus stabilizes the societal status quo whereas the latter one serves as precondition for the development of autonomous individuals presupposing a just social framework, i.e. laws to secure and stabilize this condition of freedom. In most contemporary Western societies, negative freedom guarantees the citizens the right to take part in elections, however in order to live democracy actively there is further the need for self-mastery and the precondition of the (political) educated and enlightened citizen.

The neo-liberal notion of freedom emphasizes the need for positive freedom neglecting and fighting negative freedom via privatization of all kinds of state institutions. Following this understanding of positive freedom and self-mastery one ends up in the rules of nature promoting the idea of the survival of the fittest. This notion of false autonomy corresponds with the ideas of meritocracy and serves both social injustice and the development of false consciousness while veiling the societal relations und neglecting the social coercions being subject to all citizens within the given formation of society. This neo-liberal freedom is based

on a mythologized and incompleting concept of freedom. The privatization of institutions of education is “advertised” as freeing the citizens from the chains of the state while in reality bereaving the citizens of the preconditions of negative freedom. Another example is the change from permanent employment to subcontracting on the free labor market and in state institutions like universities from tenure to contract academics. The social peace and security provided by state institutions are at stake. Corporations have increased incredible flexibility and thus mobility in the labor force in downsizing the number of permanent employees as well as their benefits. Permanent labor transforms into subcontract labor with few benefits and low wages. The production sites are increasingly decentralized and outsourced all over the globe. The ongoing concentration of economic and political power of transnational corporations is a danger for democracy. “Instead of advocating a universalism of human rights, the modern global economic system, is advocating a universalism, in which any standard or regulation protecting the welfare of a nation's people that gets in the way of ‘free’ trade, is done away with or penalized.”<sup>4</sup>

One can argue against the limitation of freedom due to the exclusively promotion of positive freedom in the framework of social injustice and the development of false consciousness with Rawls' idea of the priority of liberty, i.e. that the restriction of liberty only for the sake of liberty. “Whether men are free is determined by the rights and duties established by the major institutions of society. Liberty is a certain pattern of social forms.” (Rawls, 1999, p. 55 f.; 1971)

### 3 Societal Arbitrariness

#### 3.1 Arbitrary Power and Neo-liberalism

The transnational corporation policies of privatization and the limiting of the states' power by evading or perforating the law are carried out by exercising arbitrary power. Block defines arbitrary power as “an act of the will not guided nor restricted by any law. It is characteristic of all absolute governments to become arbitrary, but in theory we can well conceive of a power without external limits, which would impose limits to itself and respect the limits thus selfimposed.” And he continues:

“But it would be an error to look for arbitrary power only in despotic states. Frequent examples of its exercise are found under constitutional governments and even in republics, in countries governed by law and ranged by the Germans under the denomination of *Rechtsstaat*. These cases of arbitrary power should be charged to the account of the discretionary power which the laws are obliged to leave to a considerable number of officials, or rather to the account of citizens who submit to the abuse of power without making use of the legal defense at their command.” (Block, 2004)

Hindess identifies, beyond Block's description of arbitrary power in despotic states and the range of arbitrary action by officials, the neo-liberal promotion of arbitrary power by governments and states themselves. (Hindess, 2000, p. 68) He argues that the liberal emphasis on freedom as normative commitment takes individual freedom and liberty as an end in itself, thus limiting the state's means of action and objectives. The liberal rationality supports the idea that free interaction and decision making in the domain of economic activity and the workings of civil society by individuals will function the best, when external influence is reduced to a minimum. (Hindess, 2000, p. 70f.) Hindess refers to the problem that the

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<sup>4</sup> See: <http://it.stlawu.edu/~pomo/mike/accumu.html> (last access 06.07.2010)

neo-liberal government's emphasis on "freedom" could veil the role of coercion in neo-liberal political reason. His focus is the support of despotism provided by neo-liberal promotion of freedom exemplifying the neo-liberal promotion of arbitrary power as follows:

- “1) legislation and other government action to shift the balance between employer and employee in favour of the former, and the corresponding weakening of the bargaining capacities of unions.
- 2) changes in public service organisation involving a move away from established patterns of bureaucratic rationality and towards a more entrepreneurial form of organisation characterised by the identification of cost-centres, the application of user-pays principles, allowing managers to manage, and so on.
- 3) related changes in universities that further undermine the collegial elements still remaining in university government and which promote in their place an emphasis on managerial hierarchy, cost-centres, and so on.
- 4) the corporatisation and privatisation of public services.
- 5) changes in the character of regulatory bureaucracies and a significant weakening of many of them through funding cuts, amalgamations, and so on.
- 6) legislation and other government action to restrict the scope for legal challenge to the decisions of government agencies.
- 7) setting high prices for government reports and for access to information on the performance of government agencies.” (Hindess, 2000, p. 72)

### **3.2 The Institutionalized Mind and Societal Arbitrariness**

These governmental developments are following the notion and politics of neo-liberal rationality promoted by World Bank, the IMF and other transnational organizations that are interested to reduce the power of nation states in order to increase the possibilities of “free trade”. According to Hindess, all this is to weaken significant restrictions on behavior

“of business, senior managers within public and private organizations, and government departments and their ministers. It is in this sense that they can be seen as promoting the institutionalization of arbitrary power. Here, this last phrase is used advisedly in order to highlight an aspect of liberal and neo-liberal governmental thought that may be overlooked by focusing only on the liberal commitment to freedom.” (Hindess, 2000, p. 72f.)

It is crucial to note that “arbitrariness” is used in this context by (neo-) liberals not in relation to randomness but to point out the sphere of agitation that is not affected by restrictions of law. To change the rule of the game and thus displacing state regulations by transforming former institutions of the public sector directed by neo-liberal market notions of privatization and deregulation promotes the institutionalization of arbitrary power. (cf. Hindess, 2000, p. 78) In order to “succeed” the competition between nations, the government and state institutions focus strategically on rivalry, accountability and cost reduction in the name of efficiency. The most visible effect in content of this change in politics is the change of importance from focusing the welfare state and fighting unemployment to just budgetary policies for the sake of national economic efficiency. Nearly all spheres of governmental institutions and public policies are hurrying submissively ahead in order to accomplish the goal of international economic efficiency set by organizations like World Bank, IMF, OECD and WTO.

The replacement of bureaucratic order by flexible goal orientation and contracting policies serves the idea of freedom in an “active society” proclaimed by the OECD. (OECD 1990; 1988) In this context, an active society means organizational and institutional flexibility as

well as competitive citizen legitimated by the concept of positive freedom. Here positive freedom is both a mystification and an illusion. A mystification on the (inter)national meso- and macro-level so as to legitimize the neo-liberal notion of freedom leaving out substantial preconditions formulated in the concept of negative freedom and on the micro-level an illusion because it promotes a concept of false autonomy amplifying individual alienation and one-dimensionality. This neo-liberal social change requires the disentanglement from societal responsibilities and commitments to be able to transform into – what I call – societal arbitrariness including social-indifference, institutional-arbitrariness and social-ignorance. Social-ignorance can be observed on the meso-level by societal decision-maker like politicians, economists, entrepreneurial bureaucrats as well as public servants – alienated by economic and instrumental reason – introducing and establishing structures of arbitrary power following the agenda of supra- and international competition without reflection of its (societal) need. Institutional-arbitrariness comprises deregulations of institutional commitments and responsibilities such as the change from full-employees to temporary worker, contracting policies and all kinds of weakening of legally bindings. Institutional-arbitrariness is a new form of societal rules of social obligations on the micro-level and social-indifference is the erosion of societal rules laws serving to prevent irresponsible effects of contemporary capitalism in the name of social peace and social integration of all social layers and classes on the macro-level.

Thus, “social-ignorance” is an alienation type that is, for example, the university boards, leaderships or decision makers following the notion of (inter-) national rivalry and competition legitimizing the discourses of performativity, accountability and surveillance. Unconscious, or even conscious, ignorance towards various different possibilities to lead institutions and deal with humans, not mixing up aims and means. It is an internalized surrender to think otherwise, a blockade of the dialectical movement from otherness to the other, remaining mainly in Lefebvre’s fourth proposition, i.e. in the state of reification. This is about a specific kind of passiveness hindering the mind to move. Social-ignorance is supported by the lack of international regulations and frameworks and can be identified as “social-indifference” towards the effects of exploitive and destructive ways of organizing societies in order to gain as much profit as possible. This is based on the lack of international regulation that is to keep (social) peace and to set demarcation lines on mastery and exploitation of the outer and inner nature. It is Lefebvre’s first proposition, the dehistoricization of global development and the recognition and acceptance of the world’s totality, i.e. the obvious interrelation between international exploitation of nature and humans; mass immigration; global warming; as well as a reactionary nationalist trend in politics. (International) social- indifference supports legally the current neo-liberalization of the world by acting like a passive by-stander. Related to the types of social-indifference and social-ignorance, institutional-arbitrariness is characterized by relying on the existing rules and avoiding to act actively otherwise. From the perspective of sociology of organization, it is a single-blindness concerning institutional contingencies. In the spotlight of possible (re-)actions is only what has the quality assurance stamp of performativity and accountability surrounded by metaphors of competition emphasizing international and national competition. The shadow around the spotlight with all its shades of grey remain unrecognized, unseen and avoided. It is the institutional “willing helper” of contemporary politics of global exploitation and destruction. With respect to institutions of higher education, it is the neglect of working profoundly with societal crucial agendas, that do not support the neo-liberal agenda, i.e. only assisting research, teaching and thinking that go in line with realizability, practicability, efficiency in the realm of accountancy.

All in all, societal-arbitrariness and the related typologies of social-ignorance, institutional-arbitrariness and social-indifference help to identify specific forms of alienation within the current (global) neo-liberal agenda and the relation between modes of passiveness of individuals, organizations and social policies and politics. To change this situation and after having identified these hindrances and obstacles it is crucial to learn again to think otherwise. To be successful in petrified organization or social relations is, in reality, the opposite. It just supports the maintenance of the societal status quo, hindering the historical movement to a broad set of contingencies.

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